

**SUMMARY OF THE
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2000**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, February 17, 2000 at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by the committee's co-chair, Ms. Carol Batterton of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and Dr. Charles Brokopp of the Utah Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues contained on the committee's agenda.

AGENDA ITEMS

Minutes from last conference call February 10, 2000 are not yet available.

Report on Board Action: Ken Jackson sent to the NELAC Board a copy of draft legislation and suggested change to a letter that will be sent by Jim Pearson to Deputy Administrator Michael McCabe. The letter to Mr. McCabe was sent on February 17, 2000.

Initial Assessor Training: Who will get credit for taking the initial assessor training? Anyone who takes the training should get credit for the training. Trainers will get credit for the course if they also attend the entire course and take the test. NELAC currently has no pass or fail requirements for the course. Anyone who takes the course and the open book test will receive credit. Section 3.2.1. says that an assessor must satisfactorily complete an approved assessor training program.

Who approves the assessor training program? NELAC is not an operational arm and therefore can not approve the assessor training program. Only the Accrediting Authorities (AA) can approve an assessor. It is up to each AA to review the performance of each assessor on the test following the course. The AA can approve any lab assessor who satisfactorily completed the assessor training course. Completion of the course means that they showed up all five days and took the final test. In the future, this may need to be formalized to assure uniformity among the assessors. The future organization of NELAP may need to address this. It is up to each AA to review the performance of each assessor to assure that they meet all the qualifications to be an approved NELAP assessor. The certificate given to course participants should say that the attendee has satisfactorily completed the assessor training course. Third party assessors are an issue that ELAB will review and may draft some recommendations.

Draft Recommendation to the Board: Individuals who take this first assessor training course should be recognized as having satisfactorily completed the course if they attend all five days and take the examination. It will be up to the Accrediting Authority to approve the assessor according to the on-site assessment standards. The Transition Committee also recommends that

any trainer who attends the entire course and takes the exam, also receive a certificate stating satisfactory completion of the assessor training course. Accrediting Authorities may recognize any of the trainers who completed the course as approved third party assessors.

PT Requirements: Expanded scope of PT analytes for solids and an expanded PT for water programs was recently released and sent to state for state review. Some state are saying that labs need to have two set of samples analyzed before being accredited. For these new expanded PT programs, it is not realistic to get two sets of samples completed by July 1st. Some labs are saying this is not going to be possible, and would like more time to complete the two required sets of PT. Labs in New York and California have already been required to pass two out of three sets of PT for these expanded parameters. It is not clear what has been discussed by the AAs regarding this PT issue during the recent conference calls. In addition to the timing, the cost of the PT samples may place an added burden on the labs that are seeking accreditation during the first round.

The Transition Committee recommends that the approved Accrediting Authorities implement the expanded PT program by the NELAC PT Committee as follows:

1. Once the PT Committee finalizes the analyte list, and the list has been approved by the current Accrediting Authorities, the list will be made available to the laboratory community via the NELAC website.
2. Assuming Step I occurs within the next 30 days, laboratories will be expected to analyze one set of PT samples from the expanded list by July 1, 2000.
3. Laboratories must then successfully analyze another PT sample in the latter half of the year, for a total of two sets being analyzed during calendar year 2000.

The Transition Committee believes that requiring laboratories to analyze two sets of expanded PT samples by July 1 will be a significant burden on the laboratories.

This recommendation needs to be reviewed by the committee and sent to Jeanne Hankins and the 11 Accrediting Authorities.

Discussion of Options: The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) met earlier this week but there was no discussion of options being considered for NELAC. Any information on the value of an environmental laboratory accreditation program should be forwarded to Mr. Parr. A review of documents will be conducted to gather information on the value of accreditation programs in general. Some recent findings regarding data quality will also be used to support laboratory accreditation. A summary of the value of laboratory accreditation would be extremely valuable and would help demonstrate the value of and need for quality data. Environmental laboratory accreditation needs to be tied into the need for quality laboratory data. The international laboratory community has already recognized the importance of laboratory

accreditation.

The committee discussed some options for the future of NELAC. The preferred options involve assuring the ongoing support for NELAC by EPA. A range of long term options and even some low priority options will need to be developed by the committee. The ongoing role of EPA and the NELAP office as presently described in the NELAC Constitution, Bylaws and standards was reviewed.

Next meeting: ECOS representative - Robert Roberts (Chuck will invite)

APHL - Lynn Bradley or Scott Becker could be invited

ASCLD - Forensic Laboratory Accreditation - Ralph Keton (Deb L will invite)

Review list of NELAP responsibilities that could be transferred to some other organization. How could EPA support this?

March 2. (Texas Independence Day) 4pm EST Carol to talk to Lisa to set up calls. Also set up call for March 15 4pm EST.

Action Items
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Batterton will provide a draft of TC recommendation on initial assessor training, and would like quick turnaround on the draft so that the recommendation can be sent to Board (prior to the Board's March 9 meeting.)	
2.	Dr. Brokopp will provide some information to Mr. Parr on the value of CLIA and the impact that the regulations have had on improving quality in clinical laboratories.	
3.	Dr. Brokopp will contact a representative from ECOS and invite the representative to participate in the March 2 call.	
4.	Ms. Loring will contact a representative from ASCLD and invite the representative to participate in the March 2 call.	
5.	Ms. Batterton will schedule the next committee teleconference for Thursday, March 2, 2000, from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. A follow up teleconference for March 15, 4 p.m. will also be planned.	

Participants
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